

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 EA-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9319

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, GW, VS

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND
GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITICS

REF: BONN 05764

SUMMARY: THE UNITED STATES IN VIETNAM (AND THE POSSIBLE
CONSEQUENCES OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA
FOR THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE) ONCE AGAIN HAS BECOME AN
ISSUE IN GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITICS. THIS BECAME CLEAR
IN THE COURSE OF THE APRIL 9 BUNDESTAG DEBATE ABOUT
HUMANITARIAN AID TO VIETNAM. THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED
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AN ADDITIONAL FRG CONTRIBUTION OF 10 MILLION DM IN

HUMANITARIAN AID. GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION SPEAKERS EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE US COMMITMENT TO EUROPE AND CONTINUED FAITH IN THE GERMAN-AMERICAN ALLIANCE. THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, CITED DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND PORTUGAL AS HAVING STRENGTHENED THE SOVIET POSITION AT THE EXPENSE OF THE FREE WORLD AND EVIDENCE OF THE LIMITS OF DETENTE AND WEST GERMAN OSTPOLITIK. THE SPD ACCUSED THE CDU/CSU OF SPREADING DOUBTS AND MISTRUST IN THE FUTURE OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. THE LEBER ARTICLE (REFTEL), LASHING OUT AT CRITICS OF THE US, HAS CREATED A DISPUTE WITHIN SPD CIRCLES AND DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER CAME UNDER ATTACK AT THE LAST SPD FRAKTION MEETING. CDU POLITICIANS TELL US THAT FOREIGN POLICY HAS NOW REPLACED INTERNAL SECURITY AS AN ISSUE OF INTEREST IN THE VOTING PUBLIC. END SUMMARY

1. FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER LED OFF THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE ABOUT HUMANITARIAN AID TO VIETNAM WITH THE GOVERNMENT STATEMENT, ANNOUNCING AN ADDITIONAL FRG CONTRIBUTION OF 10 MILLION DM FOR A TOTAL OF 25 MILLION DM. GENSCHER ONCE AGAIN STRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE US COMMITMENT TO EUROPE AND THE CONTINUED FAITH OF THE WEST GERMANS IN THE GERMAN-AMERICAN ALLIANCE. HE TOOK ISSUE WITH ANTI-AMERICAN CRITICS AND EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR LEBER'S STATEMENT IN THE "FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG", "THAT THE ALLIANCE'S ABILITY TO ACT ASSUMES THAT WE CONTINUE UNCHANGED OUR DEFENSE EFFORTS. THAT IS TRUE OF OUR ABILITY TO DEFEND OURSELVES AND ALSO OUR DETERMINATION TO DO SO." SPEAKING VERY BRIEFLY AT THE END OF THE DEBATE, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT EMPHASIZED THAT GENSCHER SPOKE FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

2. CDU/CSU FRAKTION CHAIRMAN CARSTENS ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND CALLED FOR GERMANY TO SUPPORT THE US IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. HE COMMENTED THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND PORTUGAL HAVE BEEN REVERSES FOR THE US POSITION AND THE FREE WORLD AND HAVE STRENGTHENED THE POSITION OF THE SOVIET UNION. THIS WAS NOT SAID, HE STATED, IN A TONE OF RESIGNATION OR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FATALISM AND HE BELIEVED THAT NO ONE SHOULD DOUBT THE VITALITY OF THE US WHICH DESPITE MANY SETBACKS AND MANY DIFFICULTIES REMAINED INTACT. CARSTENS PRAISED THE LEBER ARTICLE. IN PARTICULAR, HE NOTED LEBER'S DESCRIPTION OF "SO-CALLED COEXISTENCE" AND SAID THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S ANALYSIS OF COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES AND METHODS WAS A WARNING TO THE SPD AND FDP AND A CRITICISM OF THE ARCHITECTS OF FRG OSTPOLITIK, BRANDT AND

BAHR.

3. THE LEBER ARTICLE HAS CAUSED A DISPUTE WITHIN
SPD CIRCLES. AT THE BUNDESTAG FRAKTION MEETING
APRIL 8, THERE WAS HEATED DEBATE AND LEBER CAME UNDER
ATTACK NOT ONLY FROM THE LEFTISTS IN THE FRAKTION,
BUT ALSO FROM FRAKTION CHAIRMAN WEHNER AND PARTY CHAIR-
MAN BRANDT. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, CHANCELLOR
SCHMIDT REMAINED SILENT DURING THE DISPUTE WITHIN THE
FRAKTION. ONE PUBLIC REFLECTION OF THE INTERNAL SPD

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DIFFERENCES WAS THAT IN THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE WHEN GENSCHER PRAISED LEBER'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE ALLIANCE, HIS REMARKS DREW CONSIDERABLE APPLAUSE FROM THE CDU/CSU BUT ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE SPD AND FDP DEPUTIES JOINED IN.

4. IN THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE, SPD DEPUTY BRUNO FRIEDRICH ACCUSED THE CDU/CSU (IN PARTICULAR DREGGER AND STRAUSS) OF SPREADING DOUBTS ABOUT THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN SECURITY. HE SAID THAT THE WAR IN VIETNAM, WHICH HAD BEGUN AS A STRUGGLE AGAINST EUROPEAN COLO-

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NIALISM, WAS FINALLY COMING TO AN END, AND HE DENIED ANY PARALLEL BETWEEN VIETNAM AND BERLIN. THE WEST, HE SAID, COULD ONLY DEFEND COUNTRIES WHICH POSSESSED THE NECESSARY SPIRITUAL, POLITICAL AND TECHNICAL STRENGTH AND THAT HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE IN VIETNAM.

5. CDU POLITICIANS TELL US THAT RECENTLY, IN THE LAENDER ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, FOREIGN POLICY HAS REPLACED INTERNAL SECURITY AS AN ISSUE AMONG THE VOTERS. THEY BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC CONCERN RESULTING FROM POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL, THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA HAVE PUSHED FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES TO THE FORE. THEY REMARKED RUEFULLY THAT THE OPPOSITION WAS EMBARRASSED THAT LEBER HAD LED THE WAY IN SUPPORTING THE US AND WARNING OF THE DANGERS OF COMMUNIST EXPANSION. (NOTE: IT APPEARS THAT THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THE OPPOSITION'S TARDINESS IN MAKING A STRONG STATEMENT ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION WAS ORGANIZATIONAL SHORTCOMINGS RATHER THAN DIS-AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY.) THE OPPOSITION, THEY ADMITTED, WAS PUT IN THE POSITION OF EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE SPD DEFENSE MINISTER. THIS HAS MADE IT SOMEWHAT EASIER FOR THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, BECAUSE DIFFERENCES OVER THE LEBER ARTICLE WITHIN THE SPD HAVE ENABLED THEM TO PRAISE LEBER WHILE ATTACKING BRANDT AND THE SPD IN GENERAL.

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